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GOOD COMMUNICATION – A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPANY MANAGEMENT

Abstract: Communication is an important aspect of each person's life. Do you ever question your ability to communicate? Do you feel satisfied with the way you communicate with your fellow human beings? How does the process of communication affect your contact with colleagues, friends and acquaintances? Following researches on the communication ability it was discovered that most of the surveyed persons did not pay enough attention to this subject. They believe other people automatically understand them correctly and do not think about possible misunderstandings.

The objective of this paper is to present good communication as a prerequisite for successful company management. To achieve this author reveals the nature of the definition 'communication', provides methods for communication improvement, reveals the opportunities of active listening and classifies 'abstract types' of interlocutors.

Key words: communication, active listening, abstract types of interlocutors

Introduction

Communication is an important component of each person's life. Do you ever question your ability to communicate? Do you feel satisfied with the way you communicate with your fellow human beings? How does the process of communication affect your contact with colleagues, friends and acquaintances? Following researches on the communication ability it was discovered that most of the surveyed persons did not pay enough attention to this subject. They believe other people automatically understand them correctly and do not think about possible misunderstandings.

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In the contemporary dynamic conditions people communicate all the time – with their superiors, members of their family, clients, etc. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the key prerequisites for successful company management.

1. Meaning of the term 'communication'

It often happens in everyday life that after a conversation the participants have perceived the same words in a completely different manner. As a result of the wrongly perceived information during communication problems arise which are inadmissible.

In specialized literature there are many definitions for the term 'communication' but for the purposes of this research the author will mention only several of them also taking into consideration the opinions of other authors.

The authors Henry Smith and John Wakeley emphasize that ‘*Communication is providing or exchanging information, ideas, and moods through conversations, in writing or through symbols*’¹.

According to author Tatyana Hristova ‘*Everything people do to create, give, receive and use mutually beneficial information in the communication and management world is called communication*’².

Very often though, in company management the term ‘communication’ is perceived as ‘sending a message’ which is a linear, obsolete model and in most cases it does not lead to effective staff performance.

Author Desislava Petrova points out that ‘*The internal communication within the company is a formalized process and the structure of each company have to provide the opportunity for communication in four directions*’³.

In the contemporary market conditions companies cannot exist without effective communication which calls for building up of particular communication channels so that the volume of information may purposefully reach specific participants and implement the company objectives. The four directions of communication are conditionally presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Directions of communication within the company

Directions	Features
1. Descending communication	Information is sent from the superiors to their subordinates.
2. Ascending communication	Information is related to the advance of the information flow from bottom to top. It is hard for this information to be effective but it is necessary for making managerial decisions.
3. Parallel (horizontal) communication	Communication is carried out between equal hierarchical management levels.
4. Diagonal communication	Information moves between functional units which are not hierarchically equal.

Note: adapted from: Петрова, Д., Управление на фирма, изд. Екс-Прес, Габрово, 2011, с. 133.

// Petrova, D., Uprawlenie na firma, izd. Eks-Pres, Gabrovo, 2011, p. 133. (in Bulgarian)

2. Communication improvement

2.1. Methods for better communication

In the process of communication there are different methods which contribute for the improvement of the participants’ communication ability in conversation. For the purpose of this research the author proposes the following specific methods without neglecting the others:

– *Defining the purpose/intention of the conversation clearly* – Why do you want to share something? In case the speaker’s intention is not clearly defined, during the process of communication this will be perceived by the listener and will result in difficulty in understanding.

– *Choice of appropriate means of communication* – Which is the preferred means (letter or phone conversation)? Is it necessary to have a personal conversation with the concerned persons or a meeting of all participants will be more acceptable for the purpose?

– *Purposeful formulation of the message* – It is recommendable to use simple phrasings. They facilitate the understanding of the other party. Choosing the right moment for the receiver of the information to respond well to the upcoming conversation.

– *Delivering the information as clearly as possible* – It is necessary to focus on that and to speak clearly and loudly. Speech tempo is also important for better communication. It is not recommendable to speak too quickly!

¹ Смит, Х., Дж. Уейкли. Психология на организационното поведение. Варна: ИУ, 1992, с. 85. // Smit, H., D. Weikly. Psihologija na organizationnoto powedenie. Warna, : IU, 1992, p. 85. (in Bulgarian) (original title: ‘Psychology of industrial behavior’)

² Христова, Т. Мениджмънт на човешките ресурси. София: Princeps, 1996, с. 304. // Hristova, T. Menidgmant na choweschkite resursi. Sofia: Princeps, 1996, p. 304 (in Bulgarian)

³ Петрова, Д. Управление на фирма. Габрово: Екс-Прес, 2011, с. 133. // Petrova, D. Uprawlenie na firma. Gabrovo: Eks-Pres, 2011, p. 133. (in Bulgarian)

– *Asking additional questions* – The process of communication necessitates verification via asking additional questions in order to find out whether the intentions of the other party have been understood or other clarifications are needed.

When the abovementioned methods are used in a subsequent conversation the opportunity arises to eliminate unnecessary misunderstandings and to achieve specific effective actions more rapidly.

2.2. The possibilities of active listening

Psychological studies have proven that the communication process consists of four major forms:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening

For this research priority will be given to the major form **listening**. It is also necessary to point out that listening is an active process. This process requires constant attention to the subject of the conversation.

Studies show that 70% of the wake-time of a middle-aged person is spent in one of the abovementioned communication forms: reading – 16%, writing – 9%, speaking – 30%, listening – 45%⁴.

The data illustrated above show that almost half of the wake-time of people is spent in listening. This fact predetermines the necessity to reveal the possibilities of active listening in order to improve communication.

When we refer to **active (reflexive, effective, purposeful)** listening, there are two types in the specialized literature: **passive** and **active**. **Passive** (non-reflexive) listening expresses the attitude towards the participant in the conversation without using many words, i.e. the art to stay silent. Passive listening may be applied in the following situations:

- At the beginning of each contact as etiquette requires to listen to what others have to share with us
- When the participant is in an emotional crisis and needs to be listened to, to share something important with us or to receive a piece of advice
- When the interlocutor has difficulties expressing himself/herself due to a speech impediment and/or embarrassment.

In contrast to passive listening, **active** listening includes verbal and non-verbal reaction of the receiver of information. Active listening guarantees effective feedback for the speaker as well as control of the accuracy of what has been perceived. The purpose of active listening is to support the interlocutor that he/she has been correctly understood and will be assisted. Active listening expresses empathy via providing a ‘mirror’ in which the interlocutor can recognize himself/herself more clearly.

Notwithstanding the specified features of active listening in everyday life, very often its importance is being underestimated and/or ignored, probably because active listening requires much time, showing patience, positive attitude and interest towards the interlocutors. Different techniques may be used to eliminate these disadvantages, one of them being testing.

Conduct an independent test: are you a good listener? Are others good listeners? Most people have difficulties listening carefully. During communication, while one of the participants is speaking, the other is already thinking what he/she will answer the next moment. Very often many of the participants in a conversation do not listen carefully when they are emotionally agitated, angry, and afraid, have health problems or they are distanced from the conversation in their thoughts.

In such cases it is very important not only to the speaker, but also to the listener, to take actions in order to make the communication between them easier and improve it. To achieve better communication it is necessary to follow the rules presented in Table 2⁵.

⁴ www.psiholozi.com – **Дамянова, Е.** Как да слушаме ефективно, 2015, с. 1. // Damjanova, E. Kak da sluschame efektivno, 2015, p. 1. (in Bulgarian)

⁵ **Sartorius, V.** Zeitmanagement, Compact Verlag, München, 2006, S. 93 – 94.

Table 2. Rules for achieving better communication

Rules	Features
Listen to the information in a neutral way without making hasty conclusions	– It is not possible to listen and think simultaneously – You have to be completely sure that you have understood the speaker before you react
Do not react according to transitory feelings during emotional conversations	– Search for better alternatives, make one's point of view absolutely clear and impact the conversation – Unbiased arguments are always necessary in a discussion compared to personal invectives and accusations
Focus attention on the most important parts of the conversation	– If you would like to participate in the conversation, it is recommended to take notes – Filter details and ignore them
Take notes when being assigned personal tasks	– Taking notes may help you follow the complex actual state of affairs and instructions and aid/help your memory.
Do not be afraid to ask questions	– Immediately discuss unclear points/issues – Asking questions will give you certainty that you have correctly understood the speaker
Be patient	– Do not give into temptation and if possible do not interrupt the participants in the conversation
Lead conversation in essence	– Do not distract your attention and do not deviate from the essence of the conversation with unnecessary statements

Thus active listening not only improves the relationship between the participants, but also reduces the number of misunderstandings. The participants in the communication receive the necessary information which might escape the listener's attention in misunderstanding. In the professional field communication between colleagues, managers and associates may have permanent impact on the psycho-climate, and in personal aspect on the participants and the results of the company's activities. In case there are personal difference of opinion between the participants, the important information cannot be perceived and the result is not only loss of time, but this may also lead to inadequate managerial decisions. The counter 'chain reaction' impedes all activities of the company. In this case it is important that each of the participants in the communication process endeavors to achieve better communication.

3. Classifying the 'abstract types' of interlocutors

Since the dawn of time scientists have been trying, with more or less success, to classify separate phenomena, events, and people, grouping them together by their common features. Success in this direction largely depends on the chosen and used criteria. For the purpose of this paper the author will use the personality of the 'business interlocutor' and will attempt at conditionally classifying the most widespread 'abstract types' of interlocutors in the business sphere.

According to author Predrag Micic *'the abstract interlocutor is an imaginary psychological model which has specific characteristics affecting the preparation and conducting of business conversations'*⁶.

The main criteria used for the classification of the nine conditional 'abstract types' of interlocutors pertains to the possession of:

- Competence
- Straightforwardness and sincerity of the interlocutor
- Techniques for communication with other participants in the conversation
- Interest in the subject and the conversation's success

3.1. **Foolish person, 'nihilist'** – this type of interlocutor often leaves the business limits of the conversation. In conversation he/she is impatient, immoderate, agitated. With his/her position and approach he/she confuses the other interlocutors and unconsciously prompts them to disagree with his/her hypotheses and arguments.

⁶ Мицич, Пр. Как проводить деловые беседы. Москва: Экономика, 1983, с. 191 – 196. // Micic, Pr., Как проводит delowae beseda. Moskwa: Ekonmika, 1983, p. 191 – 196. (in Russian)

3.2. **Positive person** – the most agreeable type of interlocutor. He/she is good-natured, hard-working, and calm and contributes for a nice conversation and a well-grounded discussion.

3.3. **Know-it-all** – abstract type of interlocutor who considers that he/she knows everything in the best possible way. He/she always has an opinion and is eager to take the floor.

3.4. **Chatterbox** – this type of interlocutor very often interrupts a business conversation untactfully and without a reason. The time he/she loses with his/her statements is irrelevant to him/her.

3.5. **Wimp** – this type of interlocutor has the demerit of uncertainty in public speaking. He/she will gladly keep silent being afraid not to say something which in his/her opinion will look foolish or even ridiculous.

3.6. **Cold-blooded, but supercilious interlocutor** – this type of interlocutor often feels outside time and space. He/she considers the subject and situation of the particular business conversation unworthy of his/her attention and efforts.

3.7. **Unconcerned interlocutor** – this type of interlocutor is completely uninterested by the subject of the business conversation and he/she will gladly ‘slumber away’ the whole conversation.

3.8. **‘Big shot’** – this type of abstract interlocutor does not bear to be criticized neither directly, not indirectly. He/she feels and acts as a person who is above the other interlocutors.

3.9. **‘Why’** – this type of interlocutor seems born for the sole purpose of asking questions whether real or fabricated. He/she is eager to ask about anything and anyone.

It is very important to take into consideration the fact that each of the abovementioned ‘abstract types’ of interlocutors might change his/her type in any given moment depending on the course of the business conversation, the interlocutors’ positions, personal and/or mutual interests which the interlocutors present and maintain.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the term ‘communication’ the presented methods for communication improvement, the revealed possibilities of active listening and the classification of the ‘abstract types’ of interlocutors the following **conclusions** can be made:

1. The receiver of information has to be in an adequate condition to focus on the conversation. On the other hand, the best time for both parties participating in the conversation has to be chosen.

2. The speaker in the communication process has to pay attention to the way he/she expresses himself/herself so the other party might understand him/her clearly and without problems.

3. The personality of the interlocutor and the particular situations have to be considered parallel with the clear and accurate speech and observing the speech tempo during conversation.

4. In real life the classified ‘abstract types’ of interlocutors cannot be found but some form of the stated characteristics or a combination of them is inherent to people.

5. Knowing and analyzing of the ‘abstract types’ of interlocutors contributes for communication improvement in business conversations and taking into consideration the possible types of interlocutors in future business conversations.

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